

MAW
Pa 1780.1

O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

Deut. xxxii. 29.

Taken from Lloyd's Evening Post, dated Jan. 3, 1780.

HOW solemn the departure of the Year, and the commencement of another! How swiftly succeeding years roll on, and hasten us to an awful eternity! But, alas! few, very few, are excited thereby to serious reflection; so dissipated the disposition of the times! It is an age which calls loudly to every lover of Piety and Virtue to stand with redoubled firmness in support of the sacred standard of Christianity, against the riotous multitude of Folly and Vice, with which Mankind is so generally carried away, as in triumph of the great adversary of souls.

When we look seriously and candidly around, and behold how few are walking in the paths of Christian Rectitude, or even Moral Decorum; how very few are upright and just towards one another, from the genuine principle of Piety, and a love of Virtue alone, divested of worldly policy, or sinister motives; how small the number of those who stand as valiants in the sacred cause of God on earth! When we thus look around, can we wonder at the lowering clouds of divine displeasure, which have, for years, been spread over us! Can we wonder that the rod of chastisement hath entered into the habitations of many in this Nation! And shall we not take Warning by the gradual approach of impending Calamities! So that the pressure of an ardent concern might be so expressed, as to induce even one individual seriously and profitably to reflect on these important presages, I should think myself amply rewarded.

Hear, O ye Libertines! and hearken ye, also, whose conduct seems unimpeachable among men; yet you have lived in forgetfulness of the ever-adorable Creator, and upholder of the Universe. Can we suppose that God, who formed us for the purpose of his glory, will look down with approbation, or allowance, when a people created for his praise, and designed, in purity and integrity of heart, to draw their happiness immediately from him, the inexhaustible Fountain of unspeakable felicity; intended to be the heirs of a celestial kingdom, and "joint heirs with Christ;" when these debase themselves with the love of things which perish with the using, and "perplex even while they please?" Will not the Lord assuredly arise in judgment for this shocking degeneracy! The human mind graciously designed to partake of heavenly joys, even to be the "Temple of the Holy Ghost," is become the "cage of unclean birds, and hold of every foul spirit," and the receptacle of infernal pleasure; or, if less obviously polluted, yet miserably debased by being occupied in follies, in vanities, in worse than empty, unprofitable trifles, beneath the dignity of immortal souls.

Is not that plainly apparent, which I am ashamed even to mention? The faculties of the immortal soul employed in adding strength and rapidity to the current of fashionable follies, to increase the multitude of those things which feed the spirit of pride, and consequently alienate the mind more from pure and permanent felicity.

But shall these enemies of Christianity only be addressed? The general herd, and, as it were, the tumultuous mob, compared to those more subtle and refined adversaries, who, under a specious appearance, are, in reality, the assassins of Piety and Virtue, stabbing the vitals of Christianity in the dark, and under the subterfuge of deceit. How many, who pretend to be on the Lord's side, and even assume to themselves the Character of Ministers of Jesus Christ, who should be as faithful Watchmen, steadily looking out lest danger approach unawares, and uprightly giving warning to the people thereof; who should be also as wakeful, diligent Shepherds, endeavouring to preserve the sheep of Christ within the fold of that peace which the world knows not of, and to feed with food convenient for them, from the Father of spirits—and to lead them into the green pastures of eternal life. But, alas! are not many of you, who should be thus exercised, rather trifling away your time—yea, worse than trifling—not only neglecting, and suffering to sink, but indirectly, and even directly, assisting to overthrow his cause, under whose banner you profess to be enrolled? Is it not your principal study to amuse the people with elegant Orations, that you may please them, and be caressed and esteemed by those on whom your dependance is? Are you not fordid in your views—so mean in your submission to those who are immersed in the general depravity, as to prevent your being valiant, to cry aloud to the thoughtless, gay, and dissipated—to sound a solemn alarm in their ears, warning them both in public Ministry, and private Conversation, lest they remain in that path that terminates in irrecoverable destruction? Are you not so far from being advocates for the purity of the christian dispensation, as to fit in the vainly polite circles of your acquaintance, and hear, unmoved, the profanation of the sacred name and sacred themes, with the most irreverent exclamations? Are you not so enslaved by the fear of the faces of men, that you dare not lift up a finger against these iniquities? Many of you, to whom the multitude of poor ignorant mortals look for example and instruction, can sit at the tables of the luxurious in riotous excess, and join with the heedless company of those who, apparently, "have not God in all their thoughts"—join with them in revelry, and shouts of laughter from the unchaste jest, and from conversation altogether unbecoming the gravity of gospel ministers, and shamefully derogatory to the dignity of their station.

And if escaping these grosser violations of pure Propriety and Christian Rectitude, yet how few of you are diligently and piously disposed to visit the sick, the fatherless, and the widow, with a tender sympathizing heart;—endeavouring to comfort the mourners—to strengthen them who are ready to faint—to administer consolation to the afflicted—to extend the hand of charity to those whose secret groans ascend on high, for the necessities of life—and penetrate the ear of him, who beholds their poverty and your abundance, and will assuredly judge the avaricious. Will not those afflicted ones be comforted, whilst you are tormented? Can you, in the awful hour of trial, lay your hand upon your breast, and look up on high with this address to him, to whom you have professed to be servants—"Thou knowest, O Lord, that I have acted in thy sight with reverent fear—loving mercy, doing justly, and walking humbly before thee."

A SERIOUS OBSERVER.